

Exhibit 47

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13 May 2020 – Impending annexation and escalating Israeli violations

13 MAY 2020 BY PALESTINE AT THE UN

Excellency,

As the situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, continues to deteriorate, I am compelled to write in follow-up of our recent letters regarding the crimes being perpetrated by Israel, the occupying Power, against the Palestinian people, even in this time of the COVID-19 pandemic. This includes illegal colonization and annexation measures that risk destroying the two-State solution on the pre-1967 borders.

Since our last letter, not a day has passed where Israel has not cynically exploited the COVID-19 crisis, globally and locally, to forge ahead with its annexationist plans and in full coordination with the current US administration. Israeli officials have escalated inflammatory rhetoric boasting of such illegal intentions, in total contempt of international law and the appeals and warnings of the international community, human rights and civil society organizations, and leaders of conscience worldwide.

On 20 April, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and his rival Benny Gantz signed a coalition agreement according to which, starting 1 July, the parliament would be able to decide on the annexation of parts of the West Bank based on the US plan presented on 28 January. While Israel described this coalition agreement as the formation of a "national emergency government" aimed at fighting the pandemic, the reality is that this is an "annexation government", formed with the cynical intention of perpetuating the permanent colonization of Palestinian land, in breach of the UN Charter and all other relevant provisions of international law, and in flagrant violation of UN Security Council resolutions, including resolution 2334 (2016).

US support for annexation has emboldened Israeli impunity and "*provided the Israeli government with a green light to annex all West Bank settlements and the Jordan Valley and maintain its occupation in perpetuity, making a sovereign, independent and contiguous Palestinian state impossible*," as stressed in a recent letter by 32 US foreign policy professionals, including former national security officials. The permissive US attitude was reinforced on 22 April, when Secretary of State Mike Pompeo stated that annexation is "*an Israeli decision to make*", as though grave breaches of international law are States' exclusive "decisions" and no international norms guide and regulate the conduct of international relations. This was followed, on 6 May, by US Ambassador to Israel David Friedman, who is leading the joint US-Israel "committee" to "map out" areas of Palestinian land for illegal annexation, stating that the US is "*ready*" to recognize Israeli annexation of 30% of the occupied West Bank.

If allowed to proceed, these unlawful, unilateral plans will spell the demise of the two-State solution to the conflict and result in a one-State apartheid reality, with far-reaching consequences. This is not only Palestine's view, but is shared by countless politicians, academics, public figures and civil society actors, who have recently reflected on the matter. Below are just a few

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"Israeli officials have repeatedly stated their intention to annex Israeli settlements and other parts of the occupied West Bank. If implemented, such steps would not only constitute a serious violation of international law, but they would also effectively end the prospect of the two-State solution and close the door to negotiations between Israelis and Palestinians." – UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres (March 2020 report on resolution 2334 (2016)

"Annexation would mean a fatal blow to the possibility of peace and the establishment of an Apartheid State. Democracy, equality and social justice all depend on a just peace and an end to the occupation." – 56 former Members of the Israeli Knesset (17 April)

"The dangerous prospect of annexation by Israel of parts of the occupied West Bank is a growing threat. If such a move were implemented, it would constitute a serious violation of international law, deal a devastating blow to the two-state solution, close the door to a renewal of negotiations, and threaten efforts to advance regional peace. Moves to annex land and to accelerate settlement expansion, combined with the devastating impact of COVID-19 can ignite the situation and destroy any hope of peace." – Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process Nickolay Mladenov (in his briefing to the Security Council on 23 April)

"The coming annexation will pull the rug from under the argument, currently prevalent in many circles, that while Apartheid, or at least an Apartheid-like regime, is currently practiced in the West Bank, the sovereign State of Israel is a democracy." – Israeli NGO Yesh Din (Position Paper, April)

"A situation where Jewish communities in the West Bank live under Israeli civilian law, while neighbouring Palestinians live under Israeli military law, would inevitably prompt parallels with historical repressive and discriminatory regimes, including apartheid South Africa." – The Elders (1 May)

Such a move would strip away the essence and objective of existing agreements between the Palestinian and Israeli governments, which are based on the realization of a viable two-State solution, a just peace and lasting security. As Israel destroys the possibility of achieving such a vision, the Palestinian leadership cannot be expected to uphold these agreements.

In addition to its devastating effects on the Palestinian people's human rights and national aspirations and rights, Israel's planned annexation would pose a severe threat to regional peace and the rules-based international order. Acquisition of territory by force is prohibited with no derogation permitted. If it goes unchallenged in the case of Israel, then the very core and relevance of international law to global peace and security will be at risk, sending a stark message that violators of the law, even war criminals, can do so at will without any consequences.

Here we echo the warnings by former UN Secretary-General, Deputy Chair of the Elders, Ban Ki-Moon: *"The principles of international law are the bedrock of our global order. They provide a framework for defending rights and exercising power that is crucial to all global challenges. Israeli annexation of parts of the West Bank would not only be an act of aggressive folly, it would have a destructive influence on global rights and norms. I call on the whole world to speak out against this damaging agenda."*

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In this regard, we recognize the many strong statements issued from all over the world – by Arab, European, African, Asian and Latin American States and organizations, as well as by Special Envoys of concerned States and by the UN – condemning and warning against Israeli annexation. These statements reflect a global and principled commitment to the standing and universal application of international law. They also reaffirm commitment and support for the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people to freedom, sovereignty, and peace, as enshrined in the United Nations Charter and relevant United Nations resolutions, including 2334 (2016), 242 (1967) and 338 (1973) among many others.

The Palestinian people and leadership are grateful for these principled positions, which are firmly anchored in our shared values of human rights and peace and security for all. But the years have proven that Israel has no regard for such principles, and that statements alone will not compel its respect for the law or avert its destruction of peace prospects as annexation unfolds on the ground at this time. Such impunity will persist should the political will to enact measures of accountability remain lacking.

As stated by Special Rapporteur Michael Lynk, *"The looming annexation is a political litmus test for the international community. This annexation will not be reversed through rebukes, nor will the 53-year-old occupation die of old age... the international community should review its extensive menu of sanctions and countermeasures to stem this march towards further illegality. Settlement products should not enter the international marketplace. Agreements, existing and proposed, with Israel should be reviewed. The current investigations at the International Criminal Court should be supported. There has to be a cost to the defiance of international law. Only this can compel the Israeli political leadership to do the right thing."*

Other figures who have recognized the need for sanctions to deter annexation include 127 British politicians – former cabinet members, ministers and diplomats – who stated in a letter published on 1 May: *"The government must now make clear publicly to Israel that any annexation will have severe consequences including sanctions. Words are not enough: Prime Minister Netanyahu has ignored our words. We need to prevent his government from setting this alarmingly dangerous precedent in international relations."*

On 7 May, a group of former Israeli officials also called upon the Government of Ireland to approve a draft bill that would ban settlement products from entering the Irish market, underscoring that: *"Needless to say, unilateral annexation will lead to escalating crises in Palestine, Jordan, and the entire region, and runs the risk of turning Israel into an apartheid state...We firmly believe that now is the time for action from the international community to prevent Israel from proceeding with annexation, which will doom generations to come to more oppression, injustice and violence."*

If principled voices from around the world, including Israelis, are brave enough to oppose annexation call for sanctions, how can the international community perceive concrete action as anything but an imperative in the interest of both Palestinians and Israelis and the preservation of peace prospects?

We urge that principled positions be backed by proactive, concrete steps to hold Israel accountable and deter further Israeli crimes, especially in view of the impending annexation, and to safeguard the rights of the Palestinian

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We urge that principled positions be backed by proactive, concrete steps to hold Israel accountable and deter further Israeli crimes, especially in view of the impending annexation, and to safeguard the rights of the Palestinian people. As stated by former Algerian Foreign Minister, UN diplomat and Elder Lakhdar Brahimi, "*The world has overlooked its responsibility to the people of Palestine for too many decades. Silence now would be a bitter betrayal, and is certain to have dire consequences for all concerned.*"

All States are obligated to ensure respect for peremptory norms of international law. The international community must not withhold action until it is too late and Israel deals the final blow to the chance for a just peace. It can and should immediately leverage its collective influence to chart a new and credible multilateral political, legal, and economic approach that stops Israel's illegal, reckless actions from condemning Palestinians, Israelis and entire region to perpetual conflict. Accountability measures, including preventive action, must be urgently pursued denying Israel additional time to carry out its extraterritorial agenda.

We must also draw attention to the many other crimes and violations being perpetrated by the occupying Power violations in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, including its construction of settlements particularly in areas slated for annexation; its immoral and illegal blockade of the Gaza Strip; its detention of thousands of Palestinians, including children, and countless other human rights violations. Below are just a few examples of recent Israeli illegal policies and actions:

On 21 April, Israel announced the confiscation of Islamic Waqf land belonging to the Ibrahim Mosque in Al-Khalil (Hebron) to construct a road for illegal settlers to reach the mosque area, a provocative action, violating international law and signed agreements and stoking religious sensitivities. This violation also reflects the occupying Power's abject disregard of the status of Al-Khalil's Old City as a World Heritage Site that must be protected from all acts of aggression, alteration and destruction.

On 6 May, Israel revealed plans for yet another war crime – the confiscation of 1,000 square kilometers of Palestinian land to construct 7,000 more illegal units in the so-called "Efrat" settlement in the Bethlehem district south of Jerusalem, in a move clearly intended to 'prepare the ground' for annexation, as reflected in the provocative statements of Israeli officials regarding this decision.

Meanwhile, Israel persists with its destruction of Palestinian property, including homes, animal shelters, and water, sanitation and hygiene facilities. According to UN OCHA, Israel has demolished 69 structures in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, since 21 February, forcibly displacing 63 people and affecting 417 others. A third of the destroyed or seized structures consisted of humanitarian aid provided by the donor community. One of the affected Palestinian villages, Qarawat Bani Hassan, received 22 demolition and stop-work orders on 30 April alone, with the clear intent of forcibly displacing civilians to enable expansion and entrenchment of five surrounding settlements.

Settler violence targeting Palestinian communities has surged by over 80% since March. Israeli settlers have attacked Palestinians with firearms or with clubs, axes, stones, assault dogs, and electroshock weapons; torched cars; vandalized and uprooted olive trees; and stolen livestock—all under the consenting eye or with the active participation of Israeli occupation forces. As stated by Israeli NGO B'tselem, "*These actions are part of a joint strategy by*

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On 11 May, Israel extended a closure order it had issued on 20 November 2019 to censor the work of Palestine Television's office in Occupied East Jerusalem for a further six months. This blatant infringement on the right to freedom of expression and of the press is aimed at silencing Palestinian media, and constitutes yet another attempt by the occupying Power to ban any event or activity organized by or in coordination with the Palestinian Authority in Occupied East Jerusalem. Under the same pretext, on 15 April, Israel arrested four volunteers who worked at, and shut down, a coronavirus testing clinic in the East Jerusalem neighborhood of Silwan, where healthcare needs have been cruelly neglected by the occupation, leading to Silwan harboring almost half of the known COVID-19 cases in Jerusalem.

Israel has also continued arresting Palestinian civilians and its cruel, illegal policies against the 5,000 Palestinians being held captive in its jails. On 22 April, Palestinian prisoner Jaber Al-Barghouthi, age 23, died in the Israeli Negev prison after occupation forces failed to provide him with medical aid. He is the 273rd Palestinian to have died in an Israeli prison since the occupation began in 1967. A group of concerned UN human rights experts issued a call on 24 April urging Israel, which released approximately 500 Israeli inmates from its jails to protect them from a possible virus outbreak, *"not to discriminate against thousands of Palestinian prisoners facing high-risk exposure to COVID-19 and to release the most vulnerable – particularly women, children, older persons and those with pre-existing medical conditions."*

The 194 Palestinian children being held in Israeli prisons are especially vulnerable. As stressed in the statement of 11 May by UN officials: *"since the start of the COVID-19 crisis in Israel, legal proceedings are on hold, almost all prison visits are cancelled, and children are denied in-person access to their families and their lawyers. This creates additional hardship, psychological suffering, and prevents the child from receiving the legal advice to which they are entitled...The best way to uphold the rights of detained children amidst a dangerous pandemic, in any country, is to release them from detention and to put a moratorium on new admissions into detention facilities."*

International law is the key to ending these human rights violations, ending the colonization and annexation of the Palestinian land, and ending this illegal 53-year occupation. With the threat of annexation looming, it is high time for the international community to use all means available to it to uphold international law and implement UN resolutions and to demonstrate to the Palestinian people that they are not alone in the struggle for their rights, for freedom, for justice and for peace.

This letter is in follow-up to our 686 letters regarding the ongoing crisis in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, which constitutes the territory of the State of Palestine. These letters, dated from 29 September 2000 (A/55/432-S/2000/921) to 15 April 2020 (A/ES-10/xxx-S/2019/xxx) constitute a basic record of the crimes being committed by Israel, the occupying Power, against the Palestinian people since September 2000. For

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Please accept, Excellency, the assurances of my highest consideration.

Dr. Riyad Mansour

Minister, Permanent Observer

of the State of Palestine to the United Nations



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